A Message from the Dean

The reputation of the Warren Centre was well known to me prior to joining the Asper School of Business as Dean in November 2011. I knew, in particular, that the Centre was an accredited institution, that it was one of the few actuarial programs in North America that was part of a business school, and that it was internationally known as a leading source of actuarial education with many of its graduates occupying high places around the world.

Even in the short time I have been here, I realize that what I knew was, to use a cliché, the tip of the iceberg. The longevity of the program, now celebrating its centennial, and the history that goes with it, are immense sources of well-deserved pride for both the Centre and the School. The Centre has an exceptional student body. The students are deeply committed to the program, their studies, and to each other.

The faculty is top-notch and the research undertaken is as impressive as it is cutting edge.

I won’t elaborate on the foregoing because you will find the details elsewhere in this newsletter. Please read on, and enjoy.

Dr. Michael Benorrach
Dean, Asper School of Business
CA Manitoba Chair in Business Leadership

Welcome to WarrenWords

This is the second edition of WarrenWords. If you missed the initial issue, it is on our website. Just enter Warren Centre for Actuarial Studies and Research.

Also there is Assessing the Risk, an accessible, illustrated history of the actuarial program at the University of Manitoba which began 100 years ago, in September of 1912. It is a fascinating story of how the program began – thanks to the visionary Dr. Lloyd A.H. Warren, and after whom the Centre and this newsletter are named – and how it evolved into what it is today, the Warren Centre of Actuarial Studies and Research, an accredited and internationally recognized leader in actuarial education.

Last year, the final year of our first century, was again, I am pleased to report, a year of achievement and progress. In 2010, enrolment increased by 30 percent. In 2011, there was another 33 percent increase. We can claim a new scholarship, new options by which students can enrol in the Centre, and exceptional student achievements. All these and more sources of pride and gratitude can be found in detail elsewhere in this newsletter.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. You can help us improve future issues. Your comments and feedback are encouraged.

Jeffrey S. Pai, PhD, ASA, PStat
Director and L.A.H. Warren Professor
Warren Centre for Actuarial Studies and Research
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A Progress Report from the Warren Chair

The activities of the Chair during the past calendar year continued to emphasize actuarial research and education.

- Last January Professor Hal Pedersen and I participated in the AXA Longevity Risk and Pension Funds Conference in Paris, France. AXA is a large international insurance company based in Paris.
- Dr. Donald Behan and I reported on our Society-of-Actuaries-sponsored, obesity-cost study on several occasions during the year. It is available on the SOA website. Behan visited the Warren Centre during the week of March 28, 2011 where he presented our results. Later that week, I presented the same results at a seminar for Great-West Life. The results were also part of the SOA webinar on April 7, 2011.
- The study has been widely quoted. Behan is an independent actuarial consultant and Senior Research Associate at the Georgia State University Centre for Risk Management and Insurance Research.
- Jeffrey Pai and I represented the University at the annual meeting of schools with the Centre of Actuarial Excellence designation at the SOA office in Chicago, June 29-30.
- I participated in the American Risk and Insurance Association annual meeting in San Diego, August 7-10, 2011.
- I went to the Actuarial Research Conference at the University of Connecticut, August 11-13 and the Longevity 7 Conference at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, September 6-11, 2011.
- I am working on the 2012 Actuarial Research Conference in Winnipeg and the Warren Centre’s centennial celebration events. One of these will be the visits by Phelim Boyle, a pioneer of quantitative finance, and Mary Hardy, CIBC Chair in Financial Risk Management, University of Waterloo. April 2-6, 2011.

Mike Byrne
BA(Hons)/63

The unexpected passing of Mike Byrne in January 2012, was a great loss to the Warren Centre. Mike, a 1963 graduate of the program, with a successful career in the insurance industry, began a three-year appointment in 1997 with the Asper School of Business as the first Warren Chair. In that position, as requested, he directed his energies and skills toward revitalizing the program. He returned to the Centre in 2010 as Executive-in-Residence and played a key role in increasing student enrolment and with the introduction of WarrenWords.

Mike leaves a solid legacy for which the Centre is exceptionally grateful.

Thank you, Mike.

More Honours

In addition to the Warren Centre being named a Centre of Actuarial Excellence by the Society of Actuaries – one of seven such centres in Canada and twenty-three in the world – and being named the best actuarial program in Canada by the 7th Annual Knight Schools Survey, the Centre has been accredited by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries (CIA) under its University Accreditation Program. It is one of eight institutions to receive this designation and means that the Warren Centre met or exceeded the main eight guidelines established by the CIA in June 2011 by which to evaluate university applications.

Under the CIA program for accredited institutions, and beginning September 2012, approved universities can offer courses giving students the option of applying to the CIA to gain exemptions from writing certain Casualty Actuarial Society/Society of Actuaries examinations leading to Associate and Fellow status with the CIA.

Direct Admission

It’s new and it’s important. It makes the Asper School of Business and the actuarial program more accessible. It’s called direct admission.

Effective September 2011, eligible students can apply to enter any of the undergraduate programs of the Asper School directly upon completion of high school. This is in addition to the option of entering via University 1, a preparatory year, and then applying to the School for admission.

The Faculty of Science will be adding the direct admission option beginning in September 2012. From then on, students interested in pursuing actuarial studies will have the direct admission option open to them whether they choose to follow the course of study through Commerce, with a BComm (Hons) degree, or through Science, and a BSc (Hons) degree.
Conference

The Warren Centre will host the 47th annual Actuarial Research Conference August 1-4, 2012, the largest and most significant such conference in North America. It is open to all areas of actuarial practice. It is anticipated that some sixty presentations will be made by an estimated 120 actuarial scholars including several who graduated from the actuarial program at Manitoba. The last time Manitoba hosted the event was in 1981.

The Co-op Program

The Co-operative Education Option was introduced to the Asper School of Business in 2007. The program enables students, in all of the School’s disciplines, to spend a pre-arranged portion of their school year in a workplace related to their studies. The end result is that by the time of graduation, the student has received a full year of work experience relevant to their pattern of study, rather than studying full-time and working part-time or during the summer at whatever job is handy. Through the program, employers can assess the students as to their future potential with the company and the students can determine whether or not they are on the right career path or if a change is necessary.

Until recently, the Co-op Program for actuarial students had been limited to the summer season. However, in response to employer demand for actuarial students for other times of the year, adjustments were made within the Warren Centre so that actuarial students could enjoy the same co-op program opportunities as other students in the Asper School.

Scholarships

The Warren Centre is pleased to announce the introduction of the Sun Life Financial Scholarship in Actuarial Mathematics, a renewable prize of $5000 plus an internship. The first recipient was Sui Sum Rosena Chan, a third year Science student. Sun Life Financial’s generosity and support is much appreciated.

The Sun Life joins the Manulife Actuarial Scholarship of $3,500 and the Great-West Actuarial Career Scholarships of $5,000, both of which are also renewable, that were presented to first-time recipients at the annual Fish Dinner (see photos), and the Murray Segal Memorial Scholarship in Actuarial Studies, valued at $5000, established by his friends, family, colleagues and Eckler Partners Ltd., his employer. (Segal, BComm/59, joined Eckler upon graduation where he became a leading practitioner in actuarial evidence.) Wayne Heppner, a 4th-year Science student, received both the Eckler honour and his Manulife scholarship was continued for a second year. Talia Pankewycz’s scholarship from Great-West Life was renewed for a second year. She is a 4th-year Science student.

As well, two students were recognized with scholarships not directly associated with the Centre. Wayne Heppner was the recipient of the $2000 John Culver Wooddy Scholarship from the Actuarial Foundation. The Scholarship, named after a distinguished American actuary who made provision in his estate to provide funds for actuarial students, was introduced in 1966. It is based upon scholastic achievement and leadership as demonstrated through extracurricular activities. Heppner was one of fourteen recipients in 2011.

Maambo Mujala, another 4th-year Science student enrolled in the actuarial program, received the International Association of Black Actuaries Foundation Scholarship in Boston in August 2011. The Foundation received ninety-six applications but gave out only eighteen awards of between $3,000 and $5,000. Ms. Mujala was the only Canadian recipient. Also, last May, Ms. Mujala, who is co-chair of the University of Manitoba Actuarial Club, was selected to be the student representative on the editorial board of The Future Actuary, the Casualty Actuarial Society/Society of Actuaries candidates’ quarterly newsletter.
First Things First

“No more exams!” That was Sheldon Liu’s spontaneous response when asked what the best thing was about earning his FSA and FCIA accreditations in 2007.

It was an honest answer that in no way was meant to discredit the important designations – the hallmarks of the actuarial profession.

Liu had learned, that like anything worth doing, his achievements required much hard work, dedication, determination, and sacrifice. Liu wrote his first SOA exam in 2002 and his last in 2007, spending many months preparing for each one of them – a commitment made more tolerable by the fact that he had been well-trained as an actuarial student at the Warren Centre for many of his undergraduate and professional exams.

“The faculty was very dedicated to our success,” Liu said, adding that his employer, Great-West Life was also highly supportive.

While math was something that came easily to Liu, becoming an actuary was not on the radar when he graduated from Dakota Collegiate, even though his Grade 12 math teacher suggested it. Instead, Liu enrolled in University 1, a preparatory year designed to familiarize new students with the University of Manitoba and what it had to offer. Liu had an interest in business. He researched the curriculum at the Asper School of Business and discovered the actuarial program. The rest, as they say, is history.

Liu graduated from the program in 2004 but returned to the classroom in 2008 as an instructor. He found teaching more demanding than he anticipated, due in large part to modern technology and in particular, with the bank of questions associated with the courses. These questions were as accessible to students as they were to professors.

“It was difficult to come up with questions to challenge the students, which, after all, is part of what you want to do.”

Liu’s association with Great-West Life began as an undergraduate. He spent a summer at the Winnipeg head office and continued to work there once a week while in University. He joined the company full-time in 2004 and today, at age 29, holds the position of Manager, Asset/Liability Management.